

March 18, 1994
NASA Headquarters
National Women's History Month
Opening Remarks by Mr. Goldin

Thank you. I'll wear it proudly all day.

The theme of today's event is an appropriate one. Every generation acts [inaudible] dream by dreams. Action made a difference in the women's struggle for dignity and justice and today we celebrate and honor the women in that fight.

As we celebrate women's history this month, you have much to be proud of. Women have had to work hard for the gains they've made. They've had to overcome tremendous odds, and unfortunately, you still have to fight to overcome those obstacles today.

The study of women's history reveals two broad things. One, the overwhelming sexism within our society. Two, the courage and strength of women that fought it and are still fighting it. The women's movement in America was born on July 19, 1848 when Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott, called for a women's convention in Seneca Falls, New York. And after they had been told to sit in a balcony at a London playhouse. Seventy-two years later on August 25, 1920, American women finally won the vote. "We the people" finally meant all the people.

When NASA was first formed it was a lot different than today. Thirty-five years later, we see things differently. And I want you to know that I am committed to diversifying NASA at all levels. I want a NASA where all employees can go as far as their capabilities can take them. Gender and race should not even be part of the equation when it comes to hiring, salary, or promotion. This is vision for NASA, this is President Clinton's vision for NASA.

At the very top the numbers are getting better. Thirty-three percent of the thirty-nine people who report directly to me are women and minorities. In other areas the numbers are frustratingly low and we're going to fix them. Twenty percent of our astronauts are now women, [inaudible]. There are now 33 women in SES positions at NASA, 6.3%. While that's progress—10 years ago women held 2.3% of the SES jobs, and 2 years ago they held only 5.2%.—The gains are nice, but it's not nearly enough. I am not satisfied with this, NASA is not satisfied with this. Women make up 51% of the population and they should hold a much larger percentage of the jobs at every level of this agency.

We are heading for diversity. NASA personnel and our contractors, for example. Congress gave us an 8% goal of total value of NASA contracts go to women and minority owned businesses in, I think 1995. In 1993 we beat that goal.

The struggle of women has brought forth people with tremendous courage who have paid a high price for daring to challenge the white male dominated system. The list is a long one: Susan B. Anthony, Harriett Tubman, Rebecca West, Betty Friedan, Gloria Steinem, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Representative Pat Schroeder, Senator Barbara Mikulski and many many more.

The impressive women who have been making firsts at NASA have made, and are making, a tremendous contribution to the agency and to the nation. Let me just list them - Sally Ride, the first American woman in space; Dr. Mae Jemison, the first woman of color to fly

in space; Dr. Ellen Ochoa, the first Latina to fly in space; Dr. France Cordova, the first woman to be NASA's Chief Scientist; Dr. Carolyn Huntoon, Director of the Johnson Space Center and the first woman to be a center director in the history of NASA; Dr. Bonnie Dunbar, who will be the first American woman to fly on board the MIR Space Station, and many more. All of them are distinguished scientists with advanced degrees in the American school system. They're not the only ones; there are many more out there.

NASA is opening its doors for women and I hope every employee at NASA feels good about the contribution they're making. And all of those [inaudible] they're treated and go home feeling pride in what they do. Uncomfortable situations may come up, and cause ill feelings about what you're doing here at NASA. When you stand up to these situations, it's uncomfortable too. But it's more uncomfortable to go home with frustration and loss of hope, and I submit to you again that NASA is an agency where your dreams and capabilities carry you far as you can go and not the gender you were born with. And I urge you to take that uncomfortable step when the situation develops. And yet there may be some problems, but there will be bigger problems if you don't take that step.

Thank you and have great careers.